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Approved:

Benjamin W. Schrier  
 Benjamin Woodside Schrier  
 Assistant United States Attorney

Before: THE HONORABLE JAMES L. COTT  
 United States Magistrate Judge  
 Southern District of New York

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	:	<u>SEALED COMPLAINT</u>
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	:	
- v. -	:	Violations of
BRANDON BLAKE,	:	18 U.S.C. §§ 1344, 1028A, and 2
Defendant.	:	COUNTY OF OFFENSE: MANHATTAN
	:	
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SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, ss.:

STEVEN VARGAS, being duly sworn, deposes and says that he is a Special Agent with the United States Postal Service, Office of the Inspector General ("USPS-OIG"), and charges as follows:

COUNT ONE  
 (Bank Fraud)

1. From at least on or about August 27, 2018, up to and including at least on or about September 6, 2018, in the Southern District of New York and elsewhere, BRANDON BLAKE, the defendant, willfully and knowingly, did execute and attempt to execute a scheme and artifice to defraud a financial institution, the deposits of which were then insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and to obtain moneys, funds, credits, assets, securities, and other property owned by, and under the custody and control of, such financial institution, by means of false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, to wit, BLAKE deposited materially altered checks into bank accounts controlled by BLAKE at a financial institution.

(Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1344 and 2.)

**COUNT TWO**  
(Aggravated Identity Theft)

2. From at least on or about August 27, 2018, up to and including at least on or about September 6, 2018, in the Southern District of New York and elsewhere, BRANDON BLAKE, the defendant, knowingly did transfer, possess, and use, without lawful authority, a means of identification of another person, during and in relation to a felony violation enumerated in Title 18, United States Code, Section 1028A(c), to wit, BLAKE deposited checks in the name of another person during and in relation to the bank fraud charged in Count One of this Complaint, knowing that the means of identification belonged to another actual person.

(Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1028A(a)(1),  
1028A(b) and 2)

3. The bases for my knowledge and for the foregoing charges are, in part, as follows:

a. I am a Special Agent with USPS-OIG. I have been personally involved in the investigation of this matter, and I base this affidavit on that experience, my conversations with other law enforcement officers, and my examination of various reports and records. Because this affidavit is being submitted for the limited purpose of demonstrating probable cause, it does not include all of the facts that I have learned during the course of my investigation. Where the contents of documents and the actions, statements, and conversations of others are reported herein, they are reported in substance and in part, except where otherwise indicated.

**OVERVIEW OF THE BANK FRAUD SCHEME**

4. Based on my review of law enforcement reports, financial records, video surveillance footage, still images taken from that video surveillance footage, and law enforcement and commercial databases; my conversations with others, including other law enforcement officers with knowledge of the instant investigation; and my training and experience, I have learned the following, in substance and in part:

a. In or about August 2018, an individual residing in Wood-Ridge, New Jersey ("Victim-1") wrote and mailed a check for approximately \$582 ("Victim-1 Check-1"), and another check for approximately \$800 ("Victim-1 Check-2"); another individual

residing in Wood-Ridge, New Jersey ("Victim-2") wrote and mailed a check for approximately \$600 ("Victim-2 Check-1"); another individual residing in Wood-Ridge, New Jersey ("Victim-3") wrote and mailed a check for approximately \$437 ("Victim-3 Check-1"); another individual residing in Wood-Ridge, New Jersey ("Victim-4") wrote and mailed a check for approximately \$462 ("Victim-4 Check-1"); and another individual residing in Wood-Ridge, New Jersey ("Victim-5") wrote and mailed a check for approximately \$490 ("Victim-5 Check-1").

b. On or about August 27, 2018, Victim-1 Check-1 was deposited into a bank account ("CC-1 Account-1") held by an individual not charged as a defendant in this Complaint ("CC-1") at a certain financial institution, the deposits of which were then insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation ("Financial Institution-1"). On or about August 28, 2019, Victim-1 Check-2 was deposited into CC-1 Account-1. On or about September 5, 2019, Victim-2 Check-1 was deposited into CC-1 Account-1. Neither Victim-1 Check-1, Victim-1 Check-2, nor Victim-2 Check-1 had been originally addressed to CC-1. In each case, the checks had been altered so that CC-1's name appeared on the payee line.

c. On or about September 6, 2018, an individual used a debit card in the name of CC-1 and an associated personal identification number ("PIN") to withdraw approximately \$600 from CC-1 Account-1 at a Financial Institution-1 automated teller machine ("ATM") located at or around the intersection of 124th Street and Lenox Avenue in Manhattan, New York. A video surveillance camera on the ATM captured footage of that individual withdrawing the money. Based on my training and experience, and my comparison of the video surveillance footage with a photograph of BRANDON BLAKE, the defendant, from a law enforcement database, I believe that the individual described in this paragraph is BLAKE.

d. On or about August 28, 2018, BRANDON BLAKE, the defendant, entered a branch office of Financial Institution-1 located at or around the intersection of 57th Street and Broadway in Manhattan, New York, and used a debit card in the name of an individual not charged as a defendant in this Complaint ("CC-2") and an associated PIN to deposit Victim-3 Check-1 into a bank account held by CC-2 at Financial Institution-1 ("CC-2 Account-1"). Victim-3 Check-1 had not been originally addressed to CC-2, but it had been altered so that CC-2's name appeared on the payee line. Video surveillance

cameras at the branch office captured footage of BLAKE depositing Victim-3 Check-1.

e. On or about September 4, 2018, BRANDON BLAKE, the defendant, entered a branch office of Financial Institution-1 located at or around the intersection of 43rd Street and Sixth Avenue in Manhattan, New York, and used a debit card in the name of CC-2 and an associated PIN to deposit Victim-4 Check-1 into CC-2 Account-1. Victim-4 Check-1 had not been originally addressed to CC-2, but it had been altered so that CC-2's name appeared on the payee line. Video surveillance cameras at the branch office captured footage of BLAKE depositing Victim-4 Check-1.

f. On or about September 5, 2018, BRANDON BLAKE, the defendant, entered a branch office of Financial Institution-1 located at or around 124th Street and Lenox Avenue in Manhattan, New York, and used a debit card in the name of CC-2 and an associated PIN to deposit Victim-5 Check-1 into another bank account held by CC-2 at Financial Institution-1 ("CC-2 Bank Account-2"). Victim-5 Check-1 had not been originally addressed to CC-2, but it had been altered so that CC-2's name appeared on the payee line. Video surveillance cameras at the branch office captured footage of BLAKE depositing Victim-5 Check-1.

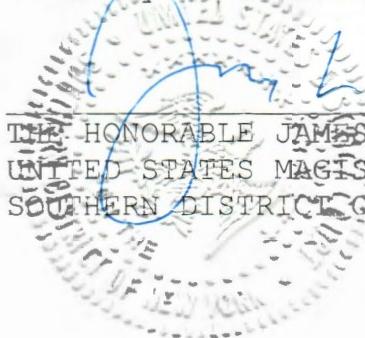
g. At no point did Victim-1, Victim-2, Victim-3, Victim-4, or Victim-5 give permission to BRANDON BLAKE, the defendant, CC-1, or CC-2 to deposit any of the checks described above into CC-1 Account-1, CC-2 Account-1, or CC-2 Account-2.

WHEREFORE, the deponent respectfully requests that a warrant be issued for the arrest of BRANDON BLAKE, the

defendant, and that he be arrested, and imprisoned or bailed, as the case may be.

  
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STEVEN VARGAS  
Special Agent  
United States Postal Service  
Office of the Inspector General

Sworn to before me this  
30th day of October 2019

   
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THE HONORABLE JAMES L. COTT  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK